

NSC BRIEFING

11 July 1956

SITUATION IN THE SATELLITES

1. An unusual degree of unrest and ferment is evident in the Eastern European Satellites--within the Communist parties, within the ranks of the intelligentsia and students, and among the general population. This ferment has developed and been encouraged largely by the changes which are taking place in the methods of Soviet control over the Satellites. It has assumed more open form since the beginning of the Soviet de-Stalinization program, which probably was taken by dissident elements as a license for a much wider range of opposition activity.

2. Moscow has been granting greater freedom to Eastern European governments in their internal policy matters, more consideration has been given to Eastern European national traditions, and the "master-servant" relationship has been appreciably altered.

A. No precise limits appear to have been set on how far this process of "liberalization" is to go, and Soviet and Satellite leaders are feeling their way cautiously in this changed situation.

3. Dissidence, discontent, demonstrations and rioting have made their appearance in one or another of the Satellites since the Soviet 20th Party Congress (Feb). These manifestations have not been of sufficient magnitude to represent a serious threat to Soviet control, but such behavior is symptomatic of the deep-seated and widespread hatred for Stalinist forms of control that continues to exist under the surface in Eastern Europe

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A. The Poznan riots of late June, in which the demonstrators demanded "Bread and Freedom", are the most dramatic example of the forces which have been released by the new Kremlin policies toward the Satellites.

B. Also in Poland, there is clearly a serious split within the Communist Party--extending into the Politburo itself--which has resulted in a still-unresolved internal struggle for control between a "liberal", more nationally-minded, party element (viz. Premier Cyrankiewicz) and a conservative group wedded to the traditional Stalinist forms of repressive control (viz. party boss Ochab).

4. In Hungary, despite his repeated endorsement by Soviet leaders (the latest in mid-June, when Suslov visited Budapest), resistance to Hungarian strong man Rakosi continues to grow and express itself in party circles. At a recent Party meeting, the widow of executed Party purgee (1949) Rajk reportedly made an impassioned plea for fewer futile posthumous rehabilitations and more "real reform". In recent months, this opposition has begun to coalesce into an active political faction with identifiable leaders. This group, essentially one of moderation, advocates removal of the Hungarian "Stalinists", including Rakosi.

5. In Czechoslovakia, opposition to the regime has been openly expressed by students, writers, and other members of the intelligentsia both in the form of parades and petitions, and in newspaper stories. On 20 May, the Communist regime was mercilessly lampooned in posters and banners carried in a student parade in Prague. On 13 June, Czech cultural boss Vaclav Kopecky admitted before a Czech Party conference that there was "great internal ferment" within the Party as a result of the Soviet 20th Congress.

6. Disquiet and confusion has developed in Party ranks in East Germany as a result of the 20th Congress, but there has been little overt manifestation of it. Ulbricht, the arch-Stalinist, is rumored to be slated for demotion, a rumor reflecting popular hatred for this leader.

7. The Satellite regimes have generally tended to adopt a moderate and somewhat defensive reaction to these demonstrations of popular and party dissatisfaction. Thus, in Poland, once the actual riots were put down, the government has so far proceeded along the line it was following before the riots.

A. The Poznan riots sent a tremor of uneasiness through the Satellites. There have been no indications, however, that--despite the risks--the present policy of "liberalization" will be halted or reversed.

B. Despite any difficulties it may be encountering, the Soviet Union is determined to ensure that the Satellites continue to maintain a Socialist (communist) state structure, preserve a monopoly of political power for the Communist parties, and assure military, economic and foreign policies compatible with Soviet interests.

C. Thus, the new Soviet program of somewhat relaxed controls is, in essence, a calculated risk taken in an effort to make the Soviet Bloc a more effective and manageable coalition of Communist states, tied by common interests.

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SITUATION IN THE SATELLITES

- I. The ferment in the Satellites has developed and been encouraged by changes in the methods of Soviet control. These have included greater freedom in internal policy, more consideration for national traditions. No limit apparently yet set on this "liberalization."
- II. Dissidence and demonstrations have appeared in one or another of Satellites since 20th party congress--not enough to threaten Soviet grip, but symptomatic of the hatred of Stalinist controls.
 - A. The Poznan riots are most dramatic example. In Poland, there is clearly a serious party split between "liberals" and repressionists.
- III. In Hungary, resistance to Rakosi continues to grow.
- IV. In Czechoslovakia, the regime was mercilessly lampooned in Prague student parade on 20 May, and at a party conference on 13 June "great internal ferment" was admitted.
- V. In East Germany, disquiet and confusion have developed, and Ulbricht is rumored slated for demotion.
- VI. The Satellite regimes' reaction has been generally moderate, somewhat defensive. The Poznan riots caused uneasiness, but no indication "liberalization" will be reversed.
 - A. USSR determined to ensure Satellites maintain a socialist state structure, and preserve a monopoly of political power for the Communist parties. New Soviet program is a calculated risk in effort to make the Bloc a more effective and manageable coalition of states tied by common interests.